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# The GROWING SCHOOL LUNCH Food Market



School food services represent an expanding half-billion dollar annual food outlet for local merchants

Marketing Bulletin No. 8

Agricultural Marketing Service

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# LUNCH AT

## **... Means Better Nutrition for Today's ... Is an Important and Growing Part of**

- Approximately 60,000 of the 106,000 public schools in the United States provided a lunch service in the 1957-58 school year. These 60,000 schools had over 21 million children enrolled. About 54,000 of these public schools participated in the National School Lunch program. Nonpublic schools with food service programs were not included in the study.
- School food service is widely recognized by educators and school administrators as an important part of the well-rounded school program.
- National School Lunch Program schools have as a major objective the service of a well-balanced meal which meets at least one-third of a child's daily nutritional needs. Children participating in lunch programs at schools develop good food habits which they will carry into later life.
- In addition to being an aid to child health and an important outlet for farm products, school lunch programs provide a medium for introducing new or improved foods on a nationwide basis. Because children are encouraged to eat a wide variety of foods, schools have become an increasingly diversified market for food.

# SCHOOL . . .

## **Children and Healthier Citizens of the Future** **the Away-from-Home Food Service Market**

- By far, the bulk of the food to supply public school lunch programs is purchased locally. For every one dollar's worth of food donated by the Federal Government in 1957-58, six dollars' worth was bought locally.
- Further expansion is taking place as new schools are constructed with modern cooking and cafeteria facilities, and as school enrollments continue to rise.
- The most important single food item in schools is fluid whole milk, accounting for almost one-third of the school food dollar. All of this milk is bought from local milk distributors.
- Of the total \$597 million dollars' worth of food delivered to public schools in 1957-58, about \$92 million or about 15 percent was donated by the Federal Government, largely from stocks acquired under price-support and surplus-removal programs.
- About 94 percent of the total dollar volume of foods delivered to public schools was used by schools in the National School Lunch Program.



# Value of All Foods Delivered to Public Schools

FOODS	VALUE OF FOOD		
	Total	Per pupil in attend- ance	Percent of food dollar
	Million dollars	Dollars	Percent
MILK AND MILK PRODUCTS.....	267.1	12.43	44.7
Fluid whole milk.....	192.3	8.94	32.2
Butter.....	35.9	1.67	6.0
Ice cream and ice milk products.....	17.0	.79	2.8
Other.....	21.9	1.03	3.7
FATS AND OILS (excluding butter).....	7.6	.35	1.3
FLOUR AND OTHER CEREAL PRODUCTS.....	15.1	.70	2.5
White flour.....	5.2	.24	.9
Rice.....	2.1	.10	.3
Macaroni, spaghetti, and noodles.....	3.2	.15	.5
Cornmeal, including grits.....	1.6	.07	.3
Other.....	3.0	.14	.5
BAKERY PRODUCTS.....	45.8	2.13	7.7
Bread and rolls (not sweet).....	34.2	1.59	5.8
Other.....	11.6	.54	1.9
MEAT.....	83.1	3.87	13.9
Beef.....	49.0	2.28	8.2
Pork.....	13.3	.62	2.2
Lunch meats.....	18.5	.86	3.2
Other.....	2.3	.11	.3
POULTRY.....	11.7	.54	2.0
EGGS.....	10.0	.46	1.7
FISH.....	12.8	.60	2.1
Canned fish.....	6.8	.32	1.1
Other.....	6.0	.28	1.0
SUGARS, SWEETS.....	8.3	.39	1.4
Sugar.....	5.0	.23	.8
Other.....	3.3	.16	.6
POTATOES.....	13.7	.64	2.3
White.....	9.0	.42	1.5
Sweet.....	1.3	.06	.2
Potato chips and sticks.....	3.2	.15	.5
Dehydrated.....	.3	.01	
VEGETABLES, FRESH.....	14.4	.67	2.4
Carrots.....	1.7	.08	.3
Cabbage.....	2.8	.13	.5
Lettuce.....	3.4	.16	.6
Tomatoes.....	1.5	.07	.2
Other.....	5.0	.23	.8

See footnote at end of table.

with Food Service, July 1957-June 1958 <sup>1</sup>

FOODS	VALUE OF FOOD		
	Total	Per pupil in attend- ance	Percent of food dollar
	Million dollars	Dollars	Percent
FRUITS, FRESH.....	6.4	.30	1.1
Citrus.....	1.6	.07	.3
Apples.....	2.4	.11	.4
Other.....	2.4	.12	.4
FROZEN FRUITS AND VEGETABLES.....	1.5	.07	.3
Fruits.....	.2	.01	
Vegetables.....	1.3	.06	.2
CANNED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES.....	64.0	2.98	10.7
Fruits.....	27.9	1.30	4.7
Apples.....	5.1	.24	.9
Cherries.....	2.3	.11	.4
Peaches.....	7.3	.34	1.2
Pears.....	2.5	.12	.4
Pineapple.....	3.1	.14	.5
Fruit cocktail and mixed fruits.....	2.6	.12	.4
Other.....	5.0	.23	.9
Vegetables.....	36.2	1.68	6.1
Green and wax beans.....	8.7	.40	1.5
Corn.....	5.4	.25	.9
Peas.....	6.3	.29	1.1
Tomatoes and tomato products.....	5.1	.24	.9
Other.....	10.7	.50	1.7
FRUIT AND VEGETABLE JUICES.....	1.3	.06	.2
Citrus.....	.7	.03	.1
Tomato.....	.4	.02	.1
Other.....	.2	.01	
DRIED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES.....	3.6	.17	.6
Dried fruits.....	.9	.04	.2
Dried vegetables.....	2.6	.12	.4
BEVERAGES (other than dairy).....	4.1	.19	.7
MISCELLANEOUS FOODS.....	26.5	1.23	4.4
Peanut butter.....	1.8	.08	.3
Puddings, pie fillings, miscellaneous sweets.....	5.8	.27	1.0
Soups (canned and dried).....	3.4	.16	.6
Other.....	15.5	.72	2.5
GRAND TOTAL.....	597.0	27.79	100.0

<sup>1</sup> Includes 60,426 public schools with a food service; does not include some 19,000 public schools serving milk only and over 26,000 public schools without any type of food service.

## **School Lunch Market Uses Local Food and Services**

- At least 95 percent of total purchases of the major food classes was made at the wholesale level. Small schools—those with pupil enrollment of under 300—used wholesale channels in buying local food just as much as larger schools.
- Based on value, deliveries of food to schools was heaviest in September and October when staple items are bought at the start of the school year. Another delivery peak was in January, while the lowest point of the school term was in May.
- Volume of deliveries of specific items reflected acceptability of certain foods by children. Next to 3.5 billion half-pints of milk, one of the most popular school lunch items was 84 million pounds of ground beef. Canned peaches, apples, cherries, pears, fruit cocktail, green beans, green peas, tomatoes and corn were the most popular of the 457 million pounds of canned fruits and vegetables used by the schools.
- About 18 percent of the 60,000 public schools with a feeding service used some kind of food vending machine in the survey year. Most frequently found were those vending soft drinks, followed by milk, candy, crackers and other similar foods. In general, vending machines were most often found in schools having enrollments of 300 or more pupils.
- Salesmen and the telephone played important roles in placing orders for food. Personal selection was used to some extent, largely in buying fresh produce.



## Public Policy Encourages School Food Services

Three major Federal-State programs under the general administration of the Department of Agriculture contribute significantly to the health and well-being of school children in this country. Although Federal assistance and general standards are provided in each instance, actual administration and program operation is in the hands of State and local education officials.

- *The National School Lunch Program*, made a permanent program by Act of Congress in 1946, is an outgrowth of year-to-year Federal assistance that started during the early 1940's. Operated cooperatively by Federal, State and local authorities, the program provides cash assistance and commodities to public and private schools of high school grade and under. To be eligible for assistance, schools agree to operate the lunch program on a nonprofit basis, to serve meals that meet at least minimum standards of nutrition, and to serve lunches free or at a reduced price to those children unable to pay in full. For the school year 1959-60, some \$93.8 million was apportioned to the States and Territories, all of which was spent locally for food. In addition, about \$58.5 million worth of food was purchased by USDA and distributed exclusively to participating schools.
- *The Special Milk Program*, first authorized by Congress in 1954, is designed to encourage increased consumption of milk by children in public and private schools of high school grade and under, child-care centers, and similar nonprofit institutions for children. Reimbursement payments enable the schools and other institutions to serve more milk at lower cost, or to inaugurate milk service where none existed. In the school year 1959-60, children in over 81,000 schools and institutions consumed nearly 2.4 billion half-pints of milk purchased locally under the program.
- *The Direct Distribution Program* donates Government-owned foods acquired under price support and surplus removal operations to several categories of recipients. Nonprofit lunch program schools have first priority on available supplies and are eligible to receive surplus foods whether or not they participate in the National School Lunch Program. In 1959-60, nearly \$70 million worth of surplus foods were donated to schools.



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These facts and figures are from a study of foods used during the 1957-58 school year in some 60,000 public schools having food service. The detailed report by the Agricultural Marketing Service's Marketing Research Division is MRR No. 377, "The Market for Food in Public Schools," available from Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D.C.

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